

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 7293

FODAG

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: AORG, FAO
SUBJECT: GENEVA GROUP: MEETING WITH SAOUMA

1. SUMMARY: GENEVA CO-CHAIRMEN HAD HOUR-AND-A-HALF EXCHANGE WITH DG SAOUMA APRIL 17 WITH ADG WEST AND DDG PHILLIPS PRESENT BUT RELATIVELY UNUTILIZED. AT OUTSET DG SOMEWHAT DEFENSIVELY MADE CLEAR HIS BUDGET AUTHORITY AND LACK OF OBLIGATION TO DEAL RE BUDGET WITH GROUPS - AS OPPOSED TO REPRESENTATIVES OF MEMBER STATES. NOTWITHSTANDING, HE PERMITTED HIMSELF TO BE DRAWN OUT AT SOME LENGTH ON ISSUES HE SAW AS MOST LIKELY TO IMPACT ON 1980-81 BUDGET (E.G. OVERHEAD COSTS, ACTION PLAN OF AGRARIAN REFORM CONFERENCE; NUTRITION; REGIONAL CONFERENCE PROPOSALS) DESPITE FACT THAT CO-CHAIRMEN EMPHASIZED THEY WERE PRESENT ON BEHALF OF GENEVA GROUP AND HOPED TO CONFER PERIODICALLY WITH HIM AS SUCH. WHILE TOUCHING ON VARIOUS MANAGEMENT AND EVALUATION ISSUES, GG CO-CHAIRMEN AVOIDED MENTION OF CONSULTATIONS ON BUDGET METHODOLOGY, PREFERRING TO PURSUE THIS AS AGREED EARLIER WITH WEST, AS FAO MEMBERS, RATHER THAN AS GG MEMBERS, WITH ADG WEST AT EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY. DG'S BOTTOM LINE WAS STATEMENT THAT HE HAD
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TAKEN NOTE OF GG POSITION AT FAO CONFERENCE AND OF GG ACTION ON WHO BUDGET; IF WHO DESERVED 2 PERCENT REAL PROGRAM GROWTH, HE WOULD HOPE THAT FAO, IN EYES OF MAIN DONORS, WOULD MERIT A BIT MORE, GIVEN VERY FUNDAMENTAL NATURE OF THE BASIC HUMAN NEED - FOOD - WITH WHICH IT WAS CONCERNED. END SUMMARY.

2. WHEN DG RECITED LONG LIST OF MEETINGS AND INITIATIVES WHICH

WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY IMPACT ON 1980-81 BUDGET AND GAVE THIS AS REASON WHY HE HAD NOT YET FOCUSSED ON SIZE OR ORIENTATION OF THAT BUDGET. GG CO-CHAIRMAN DREW HIM OUT ON VARIOUS OF THEM. AGRARIAN REFORM CONFERENCE CLEARLY LOOMED EVER LARGER IN HIS EYES AND HE TERMED IT "MORE IMPORTANT THAN 1980 FAO CONFERENCE" IN ITS SUBSTANTIVE AND PERHAPS ITS BUDGETARY IMPACT. WHILE HE AWARE OF CURRENT TENDENCY TO LOAD UP DRAFT AGENDA TO MEET PRESSURES FROM VARIOUS INTERESTED PARTIES AND U.N. AGENCIES, HE INDICATED THAT CONSENSUS PRINCIPLES AND PROGRAM OF ACTION, WHICH HE PLANNED TO NEGOTIATE WITH MEMBERS IN ADVANCE OF JULY 1979 CONFERENCE WAS MAIN FOCUS OF HIS INTEREST.

3. DG GAVE CONSIDERABLE IMPORTANCE TO CURRENT EFFORTS ASSIGNED TO AN FAO TASK FORCE UNDER DDG PHILLIPS ON TRAINING, TO RATIONALIZE FAO'S FIELD TRAINING PROJECTS, SEMINARS, WORKSHOPS, FELLOWSHIPS TO SEE WHETHER SOME PROGRAMS SHOULD BE TERMINATED AND OTHERS DEVELOPED. US REP COMMENDED THEIR MANAGEMENT APPROACH AND EXPRESSED HOPE THAT ADMINISTRATIVE SAVING COULD BE ONE END PRODUCT.

4. DG LAID STRESS ON POSSIBLE IMPACT ON BUDGET OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROJECT OVERHEAD ISSUE TO BE DISCUSSED AT UNDP COUNCIL. DESPITE WEST INTERJECTION THAT MORSE DID NOT INTEND IMPLEMENT AGREED CHANGES IN METHOD UNTIL 1982-83 BIENNium, DG ARGUED POTENTIAL IMPACT ON 1980-81 BUDGET AND SAID HE WOULD SOON CIRCULATE A PAPER GIVING FAO VIEWS OF LATEST EDITION OF BERTRAND J.I.U. PAPER. HE WOULD THEN INVITE PERMREPS OF CONFIDENTIAL

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UNDP COUNCIL COUNTRIES TO DISCUSS IT WITH HIM OR WEST (WHO IS DOING THE PAPER).

4. DG EMPHASIZED IMPACT OF 1978 REGIONAL CONFERENCES ON NEXT BUDGET AND, ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT SAY SO, WE ARE TOLD HE PLANS TO BE PRESENT AT ALL OF THEM. HE DID NOT ANTICIPATE EXACTLY WHAT BUDGETARY PRESSURES WOULD DERIVE FROM THEM. LIKEWISE, HE MENTIONED PROBABILITY THAT 1978 COFI, COFA, AND COAG MTGS WOULD PRODUCE RECOMMENDATIONS IMPACTING ON BUDGET AND HE DID NOT FAIL TO NOTE RECOMMENDATIONS OF AD HOC COMMITTEE ON NUTRITION STIMULATED BY U.S. DEL.

5. U.S. REP ASKED IF DG WAS FOCUSSED ON 1978-79 PROGRAMS LIKELY TO PRODUCE AUTOMATIC GROWTH FOR 1980-81, FOR EXAMPLE COUNTRY REP'S PROGRAM. DG RESPONDED IN RATHER STEELY TONE THAT EMPLACEMENT OF 47 COUNTRY REPS GOING AHEAD ON SCHEDULE "IN COMPLIANCE WITH DIRECTIVES OF FAO CONFERENCE," AND THAT MORE COUNTRIES WERE BIDDING FOR FAO REPS THAN HE COULD SATISFY. HE STATED FAO REPS BEING INSTALLED ONLY WHERE THERE WAS STRONG CASE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ROME 7293

IN TERMS OF FAO ACTIVITY OR RECIPIENT COUNTRY NEED (YRIART,
IN SEPARATE CONVERSATION, SAID PREFERENCE WAS TO SET THEM UP
WHEREVER SAPCE SUFFICIENT WITHIN RES REPS'S BUILDING,
ALTHOUGH WE DOUBT THIS IS DG'S PREFERENCE). SINCE, DG GAVE
NO INDICATION THAT THIS COSTLY PROGRAM BEING SLOWED IN IMPL-
MENTATION, U.S. REP ASKED IF HE WAS SEEKING WAYS TO COUNTER-
BALANCE ITS IMPACT ON 1980-81 BUDGET BY FURTHER REDUCTIONS AT
HEADQUARTERS. DG SAID THAT HE WAS AND THAT, FORTUNATELY
OFFICE SPACE DID NOT PERMIT FURTHER HEADQUARTERS GROWTH. HOW-
EVER HE SAID IT WAS DIFFICULT TO FIRE PEOPLE AND HE HAD TO
RELY ON PROCESS OF ATTRITION THRU RETIREMENTS.

6. TWICE DURING CONVERSATION, DG SAID HE HAD TAKEN NOTE OF
GENEVA GROUP (CG) VIEWS AS EXPRESSED T CONFERENCE AND CG ACTION
WITH RESEPECT TO WHO BUDGET. EACH TIME, HE REITERATED THAT
FAO WAS NOT ITU, AND THAT EVEN IN COMPARISON WITH WHO - WHOSE

DG HAD, SAOUMA STATED, EMPHASIZED FUNDAMENTAL NATURE OF NEED
FOR FOOD - FAO DESERVED MORE UNDERSTANDING. HE PROMISED THAT
HE WOULD, AT NOVEMBER COUNCIL, SET FORTH PRELIMINARY NEWS ON THE
NEXT BUDGET, ALTHOUGH PERPHAS NOT IN NUMERICAL TERMS IF
INFLATIONARY TRENDS AND
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CURRENT EXCHANGE STILL UNSTABLE. CG CO-CHAIRMAN STRESSED
IMPORTANCE OF HIS INDICATING BOTH AREAS OF PROBABLE GROWTH

AND AREAS OF POSSIBLE SAVING. US REP STRESSED THAT MOTIVATIONS AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH LAY BEHIND CG STATEMENT AT NOVEMBER FAO CONFERENCE HAD IN NO WAY DIMINISHED. UK REP EMPHASIZED VALUE OF CONTINUED PERIODIC EXCHANGES WITH DG SO THAT GOVERNMENTS COULD UNDERSTAND WELL IN ADVANCE OF BUGET PRESENTATION DIRECTION OF HIS THINKING.

COMMENT:

7. OVERALL TONE OF EXCHANGE WAS GOOD. DG, WHO HAD IMPLIED EARLY IN CONVERSATION THAT HE DID NOT WANT TO BE SUBJECTED TO "HARRASSMANT", PARTICIPATED SUBSEQUENTLY IN GOOD SPIRIT BUT DID NOT YIELD ANY GROUND WITH RESPECT TO HIS INITIATIVE, AUTHORITY, OR TIMING ON BUDGETRY MATTERS. UK REP MADE OPENING APPROACH IN CONCILIATORY VEIN AND U.S. REP PROBED AT VARIOUS POINTS FOR SIGNS OF DG IMPROVEMENT IN MANAGEMENT EFFORTS TO CUT COSTS. THIS EMERGED TO SOME DEGREE IN CONNECTION WITH HIS REMARKS ON THE TRAINING TAKS FORCE AND HEAQUARTERS PERSONNEL. HE DID NOT, HOWEVER, VOLUNTEER ANYTHING ABOUT ACROSS-THE-BOARD INTERNAL EVALUATION PROGRAM BEING FORMULATED OR CALL ON WEST TO DESCRIBE IT. IN ORDER PROTECT WEST, WHOSE FINAL INTERNAL EVALUATION DESIGN STILL NOT IN FINAL FORM, WE DID NOT RAISE THIS PROGRAM. WESTKNOWS WE SUPPORT IT AND IS MOVING AHEAD BUT TELLS US THE MORE THIS IS STRESSED TO DG, THE MORE HE TENDS TO REGARD TO EVALUATION MECHANISM AS SOME KIND OF A TROJAN HORSE WHOSE FINDINGS CAN BE ASCERTAINED THROUGH STAFF INDISCRETIONS AND USED "AGAINST" HIM BY MAIN DONORS.

8. DG REFERENCE TO WHO EXECUTIVE BOARD'S JANUARY DECISION WAS CERTAINLY NOT ACCIDENTAL. WEST HAS BEE BRIEFING HIM ON THIS. QUESTION IS WHAT IS THE EXACT MEANING IN BUDGETRY TERMS OF THIS DECISION. WE UNDERSTAND THERE ARE DIFFERING INTERPRETATIONS IN CONFIDENTIAL

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GENEVA AND WE ASSUME THAT WEST IS AWARE OF THEM AND WILL EMBRACE WHICHEVER ONE IS MOST USEFUL AS A POINT OF DEPARTURE FOR FAO.GARDNER

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